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April 4, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ROSTOW

SUBJECT: A few comments about the attached on Berlin

1. I agree that it is highly desirable to attempt to keep the Soviets from raising the Berlin issue. I have made a suggestion about a possible procedure at the end of my memorandum for the President regarding the MacMillan visit. (Perhaps Mac could show you his copy.)

[REDACTED]

3. As I pointed out in my memorandum, we might even go so far as to say that neither side should press demands which can be achieved only by war. The reverse side of this is, of course, the implication that we would take drastic action if the Berlin issue were pressed.

4. Nevertheless, I have serious reservations about the attached:

a. We should not give the impression that we are panicked by the prospect of a Soviet peace treaty with Eastern Germany.

[REDACTED]

Our position should be much more relaxed and to the effect that a peace treaty with Eastern Germany cannot affect the obligations of the USSR. It is a way to precipitate a crisis, not to justify it. And it will evoke counterpressure on our part against the GDR;

b. I notice a contradiction between the first paragraph and the second. In the first paragraph, the implication is that Khrushchev will force the Berlin issue before October unless his colleagues prevent him; in the second paragraph,

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BY *hlm*

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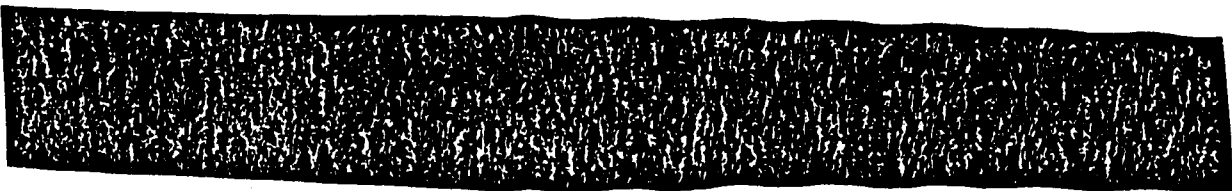
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it says that Khrushchev is the best possible Russian leader. This is not absolutely inconsistent, but with respect to Berlin it raises some doubt;

c. There is no doubt that we should avoid actions which lead to dangerous situations. But it is not clear how we are provoking a Berlin crisis by standing firm; and

d. I am in favor of an overture on the frontier problem, as I will point out in a later memorandum, but I think the overture should be directed to the satellites, specifically to Poland and Czechoslovakia. This could be coupled with the theme: "Why fight for Germany when your security is already assured.".




Henry A. Kissinger

Attachment:
Subject paper.

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